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SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: DISENGAGEMENT SITUATION REPORT,  
AUGUST 18

This is a joint message from Embassy Tel Aviv and Consulate General Jerusalem.

This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.  
This message conveys information as of 1700 hours local time.

1. (SBU) Summary: On the fourth day of disengagement, IDF soldiers and police focused on evacuating Kfar Darom, Kfar Yam, and Neve Dekalim. The security forces encountered some resistance in these settlements, particularly from young infiltrators from outside of the Gaza Strip who barricaded themselves in synagogues. The evacuations are going faster than the GOI had anticipated, however, and demolitions of homes may begin as early as Sunday. The killing of four Palestinians by an Israeli settler at Shilo in the West Bank on August 17 provoked a total of five rockets attacks aimed at Israeli targets, according to UNRWA. End Summary.

2. (SBU) SETTLER EVACUATION STATUS

-- The Disengagement Authority and the Israeli Police assessed that the evacuations would be over by Monday or Tuesday of next week, earlier than expected. They told a ministerial committee today that 70 percent of Gaza's settlers have already been evacuated. They also told the committee that the demolition of houses in Kerem Atzmona outpost, Rafah Yam, Gan Or, Peat Sadeh, and possibly Dugit would begin on August 21. Gabi Golan in the PM's office told Economic Counselor that the demolitions will be carried out by private Israeli companies; Emboffs will arrange a meeting with these companies with Special Envoy Wolfenson's team and World Bank experts to determine how the different types of rubble will be handled. Golan estimated that demolishing the homes, and removing infrastructure and goods left behind, would take another month. (Note: Golan said 500 families left without packing their belongings. End note.) Public buildings other than synagogues and holy places would not be destroyed.

-- PM Ariel Sharon has stated that no Palestinians would enter evacuated areas until the last soldier leaves, according to Israeli press reports. Sharon said he was concerned about looting of property left behind and asserted that the PA could not be relied on to prevent this. (Note: Palestinian workers were to have been able to access the settlement greenhouses in order to care for them and the crops. Special Envoy Wolfensohn's team is working on access for these workers. End note.)

-- Disengagement protestors blocked the Kissufim road and destroyed the fence that runs along it. The police arrested a disengagement opponent who was suspected of trying to light a bus on fire.

-- Despite the fact that a significant number of residents have already left Neve Dekalim, between 1,000 and 2,000 residents and youths from the West Bank remained holed up today in the synagogue compound.

-- In Kfar Darom, security officers were forced to enter the settlement through a side gate because disengagement opponents blocked the main entrance. Thousands of troops went into the settlement with anti-riot gear and wooden bats, according to press, and surrounded the synagogue where hundreds of opponents had barricaded themselves in. Many of the opponents, as in the case of Neve Dekalim, were youths from outside of the Gaza Strip, not the settlement's residents themselves. In fact, the majority of the residents returned to their homes mid-day, leaving 400 infiltrators in the synagogue alone.

-- In Kfar Yam, some 500 infiltrators barricaded themselves in a kindergarten and in a synagogue. They threw stones at soldiers, and set tires on fire, and a soldier was lightly injured by a bottle.

-- Golan told EconCouns that 300 families remained in the areas to be evacuated, but all have secured permits allowing them to stay until Monday, August 22, at the latest. These

remaining families are concentrated in the settlements of Atzmona, Netzarim, and Ele Sinai. Golan stated that synagogues in Kfar Darom and Neve Dekalim will be cleared of activists and settlers by this evening. Golan asserted that most of the 2,000 Israelis remaining are under eighteen years old, are resisting for the purposes of demonstrating, but do not intend to hurt people or property.

### 13. (SBU) STATUS OF INDIVIDUAL SETTLEMENTS

The following is an outline of the evacuation of the Gaza Strip and West Bank settlements as of 1700 August 18, according to IDF reports and Israeli media.

Atzmona: No updates available.

Kerem Atzmona (outpost): 100 percent evacuated as of 1600 hours, Wednesday, August 17.

Bedolah: 100 percent evacuated as of 1500 hours, Wednesday, August 17.

Dugit: 100 percent evacuated as of approximately midnight Tuesday, August 16.

Ele Sinai: Press reports indicate that there are 30 remaining families in the settlement, indicating that an estimated 44-54 families have left voluntarily.

Gadid: An IDF officer at the COGAT Operations Center in Gaza told econoff that she expects the settlement to be 100 percent evacuated by the end of today.

Gan Or: The IDF continued evacuating the settlement today. By 1600 hours, press reports indicated that hundreds of infiltrators remained as well as two families.

Ganei Tal: 100 percent evacuated as of Wednesday, August 17.

Kfar Darom: By noon, 200 residents had been evacuated, and by around 1400 hours, press reported that 80 percent of the residents had been evacuated. Police Commissioner Moshe Karadi said in the afternoon that the IDF may wait to evacuate the 400 infiltrators in the synagogue until tonight or tomorrow, although CNN at 1700 hours was showing police in riot gear removing opponents.

Kfar Yam: The IDF continued evacuating the settlement today. There were 15 families remaining and an unspecified number of infiltrators. By approximately 1530 hours, most of the residents had left voluntarily.

Morag: 100 percent evacuated as on Wednesday, August 17.

Netzarim: All of the estimated 64 families in the settlement agreed with the IDF to leave voluntarily by Monday, August 22.

Netzer Hazani: All of the estimated 46 families that are remaining in the settlement had agreed with the IDF to leave voluntarily by today, and were boarding buses after prayers at approximately 1530 hours. Many young infiltrators were still present, however.

Neve Dekalim: Approximately 70 families remained in the settlement as of this morning, and the IDF continued the evacuation, expecting to finish by the end of the day. The security forces drove around with loudspeakers at approximately 1530 hours announcing that it was time to evacuate.

Nissanit: At approximately 1100 local time, the COGAT Operations Center in Gaza confirmed that the settlement was not completely evacuated, despite press reports to the contrary. An IDF officer told econoff that there were an unspecified number of families present that infiltrated during the evacuation process, and that security forces were present to evacuate by force. A separate IDF officer later told econoff at 1530 that the evacuation was 100 percent complete.

Peat Sadeh: 100 percent evacuated as of Tuesday, August 16.

Qatif: No updates today. There are approximately 58 families remaining.

Rafah Yam: 100 percent evacuated as of Tuesday, August 16.

Shelo/Shalev: 100 percent evacuated as of Tuesday, August 16.

Tel Qatifah: 100 percent evacuated as of 1430 on Wednesday, August 17.

West Bank Settlements:

Gannim: 100 percent evacuated as of Tuesday, August 16. According to the UN, the GOI is currently dismantling some of the infrastructure.

Homesh: No updates available.  
Kaddim: 100 percent evacuated as of Tuesday, August 16.  
According to the UN, the GOI is currently dismantling some of the infrastructure.  
Sa Nur: No updates available.

#### 14. (SBU) SECURITY SITUATION

-- Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmud Abbas called upon the Palestinian public not to be provoked into violence by the murder of four Palestinians by an Israeli extremist as this response would play into the hands of extremists wishing to halt the withdrawal from Gaza.

-- According to LTG Ward's team, PA civil police are deployed throughout the Gaza Strip, properly equipped with new public order gear and communications equipment. They rotate every 24 hours and are dominating areas that might otherwise serve as launch points for terrorist attacks.

-- Kidnapping: French Channel 3 journalist Mohammad Luoati, seized by gunmen on August 15, is still being held August 18. There is no news as to his whereabouts. According to press reports, the PA Ministry of Interior has called upon Palestinians to provide any information that would help in locating Luoati.

-- Rocket Attacks: There was only minor response overnight to the killing of four Palestinians by an Israeli settler at Shilo in the West Bank on August 17. A total of five rockets were fired at Israeli targets in four separate incidents, according to UNRWA. No injuries were reported and the IDF did not retaliate. IDF reported five mortar shells and one Kassam rocket fired overnight: one mortar shell near an IDF outpost in Morag; two mortar shells in Nir Am, near Erez Crossing; two mortar shells in the vicinity of Atzmona; and one Kassam rocket near Khan Yunis. No injuries were reported.

-- Rocket Attack Thwarted: According to UNRWA, PA security forces thwarted the firing of two rockets by Islamic Jihad from Ariaba targeting Atzmona settlement.

-- Terrorist Attack Thwarted: The IDF announced late on August 17 that its forces and the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) had uncovered an Islamic Jihad terrorist cell which planned to carry out a terrorist bombing in the next few days by using an explosive belt against Israelis in Gush Katif. Four of the cell members have been arrested: three from Muassi and the other from Khan Yunis. According to the IDF, the same cell was also responsible for a terrorist tunnel uncovered a month ago meant to have been used against Neve Dekalim.

-- Mob Violence: Anti-disengagement activists moved from Kfar Darom to Jafarawy and attacked a Palestinian home and burned two kiosks, according to UNRWA. The IDF reportedly moved in fairly quickly and forced the mob back to the settlement.

-- Heavily Armed Militants Celebrate: According to Gaza contacts, heavily armed militants walked the streets of Gaza City on August 18 in celebration of the Israeli disengagement.

#### 15. (SBU) PALESTINIAN REACTIONS

-- The HAMAS spokesman in Gaza Strip, Sami Abu Zuhri, expressed his movement's condemnation of the August 17 killings of four Palestinian laborers in the West Bank. "Our message to the Israeli occupation forces and government is that if you pull out quietly then we won't hinder it simply because we want you out, and if you want things to go smooth then you have to stop such savage crimes against our people since we in HAMAS can't stay arms folded watching you slaughtering our people," Abu Zuhri said in an August 18 radio interview with Ramallah Voice of Palestine.

-- Hamas leader in the West Bank Sheikh, Hassan Yousef, said that the cease-fire agreement of the Palestinian factions will end at the end of the year. For quiet to continue, Israel must take a number of steps, including releasing Palestinian prisoners. He told Israel Radio that if Israel's attacks continue, along with settlements and arrests, then terror attacks will also continue.

#### 16. (SBU) GOI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

-- Israeli FM Silvan Shalom told a Kuwaiti daily August 18 that Gaza will not become a "prison" for Palestinians and that negotiations for safe passages were ongoing. He warned that "if Gaza turns into a base for shooting missiles at Israel and increasing Palestinian attacks, it will be impossible to move on to another step and take a new risk."

-- The West Bank settler who shot to death four Palestinians on August 17, Asher Weissgan, remarked "I hope someone else kills Sharon" as he headed for a court hearing on August 18. (Note: August 17, during a press conference on August 17,

Sharon told the Israeli public to "strike me" rather than IDF soldiers involved in disengagement. President Katsav interjected that Sharon meant "criticize me" rather than the literal meaning of Sharon's comment. End Note.)

17. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

-- Erez Crossing and Industrial Zone: According to Gaza private sector contacts, Erez remains officially closed to Palestinians, but the IDF continues to allow a small number of people to pass based on humanitarian/medical grounds with prior coordination.

-- Rafah Terminal: According to UNRWA, Rafah remains open in both directions.

-- Abu Kholi junction: Anti-disengagement activists delayed the night opening of the crossing on August 16, according to UNRWA, Abu Kholi was closed as scheduled in both directions at 0500 hours on August 17, and is expected to reopen at midnight.

-- Karni Terminal: Karni remains open on August 18.

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